

I yield the floor.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

### PROTESTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, before I make my prepared remarks, I would like to note the fact that this is the first time that I am returning to the floor of the Senate since the events of January 6. It was in the early morning hours of January 7 that we concluded our business and left this Chamber to return to our homes for the interim period.

We left, knowing that something terrible had happened in this building on January 6, but we didn't know the extent of it. As Members of the Senate, we were largely protected from this terrorist insurrection, which took place in this building.

It was about 2:15 p.m. on that afternoon of January 6, when Vice President PENCE was presiding over the Senate and most of us were in our seats, that there was a commotion at the Chair and the Secret Service came in and literally pulled the Vice President away from that podium and took him out the door. We weren't sure what was happening. It all unfolded quickly. There was an effort to make a quorum call to determine which Senators were on the floor. It was interrupted when a representative of the Capitol Police stood where the Presiding Officer is now seated and instructed us to stay in this room, in this Chamber, in the Senate, in our chairs. The staff people and surrounding offices were going to line the walls. This was going to be a safe place of refuge for whatever was going on.

I remember that moment particularly because something happened, which is etched in my memory. Two plain clothes officers came down into the well of the Senate and stood there, just a few feet from where I am standing. One of them had an automatic weapon around his neck. I couldn't imagine what was going on, where, in the U.S. Senate Chamber, it was necessary to have that kind of firepower.

He stayed there for a few minutes, and then we were told to leave and leave quickly. We filed out the doors and down the steps and walked across through the tunnel to the Hart building, where Members of the Senate were safely protected.

That is one of the reasons I wanted to say a word this afternoon and this morning. The Capitol Police, throughout this, were heroic. They were overwhelmed by this massive insurrectionist mob. The Capitol Police, as well as the others who joined them—the DC Metropolitan Police and other law enforcement agencies, which I don't know the names of as I stand here—I want to thank them all for literally risking their lives for me, for Members of the Senate, for our staff, and visitors.

It wasn't until the next day that we learned—that many of us learned—that

a Capitol policeman had been killed—killed by this mob. My heart goes out to him and his family. I thank him and all of his colleagues, men and women, who each day get up in the morning, put on their uniforms, and come to this building to protect me and protect the other Members of the Senate and the House and all of the staff who work here. We will never be able to repay them in any words for what they sacrificed and risked on January 6, but let us never, never demean what happened that day. It was a terrorist attack—homegrown American terrorist attack.

I know we are going to spend some time discussing who provoked that attack. The Republican majority leader laid the blame, as he should have, at the feet of the President, who invited this group to Washington and then urged them to come march on Capitol Hill. I know we will go into this matter with more detail at a later point.

But the fact of the matter is, we endured a great travesty and a great violation of our Republic on that day. To think that in this building—this building that we value so much—so many people came in hell-bent on death and kidnapping and destroying this great Chamber and the building around it. It is inconceivable that this happened in America, and we have to come to grips with it in honest, truthful terms and not say: Oh, that was yesterday's newspaper, and we have to move on.

But there is good news—good news in light of the bad news that I have just recounted. The good news is that by this time tomorrow, we will have a new President and a new Vice President of the United States.

### TRIBUTE TO REEMA DODIN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as we begin the Congress and prepare to welcome President Biden and Vice President Harris, I find myself thinking of the words of the 13th century Persian poet, Rumi. He wrote, "Out beyond the ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there."

For the moment that we are living through, I would edit his words slightly. I would say: Out beyond the ideas of right versus left, out beyond the rigid confines of our current polarized politics, there is a field of common good and common purpose. I hope we will all find the courage to meet there, to work together in this place.

At another moment of dangerous division in America, Abraham Lincoln prayed that the "better angels of our nature" would help us to rediscover our common bond and pull back from the brink of a civil war.

Today, the Union, preserved through that war, is battered and divided. For the first time since the Civil War, thousands of Federal troops stand guard at our Nation's Capitol to protect it from attack by American citizens.

Carpenters and other crafts people are still hard at work repairing the

doors and windows and furniture smashed to bits less than 2 weeks ago by the insurrectionist mob. We must be better than this or we risk losing our democracy.

I believe that beyond the killing field of weaponized politics, there is still a field of shared dreams, which brings me to a specific reason I take the floor of the Senate today.

I come to thank a remarkable woman who has devoted countless hours over many years trying to help the Members of this Senate, Democrats and Republicans, find that field on which we can work together.

Reema Dodin has been a member of my staff for more than 14 years. She started as a law school intern in my Chicago office, and over the years, she rose through the ranks: legislative assistant; research director; Judiciary Committee staff member; floor counsel; and finally my deputy chief of staff.

For years, my person on the Senate floor has been this woman, this amazing woman. I am grateful for her service to the Senate and her service to the people of Illinois and to our Nation. But tomorrow Reema begins a new challenge as Deputy Director of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs. This daughter of immigrants will make history as the highest ranking Palestinian-American woman ever to work in the executive branch of the President of the United States.

As the liaison to the U.S. Senate, she will continue to help the Senate search for common ground on which to build a better future; only now she will be doing it from a different office, with a much better boss.

I know that she will be a tremendous asset to President Biden and the Nation. In these divided times, it is rare to find a public servant like Reema, whose excellence and integrity is so widely admired on both sides of the aisle.

No one understands better than Reema—well, perhaps two people in the Chamber might understand better—how this Senate works but only two. As the saying goes, she wrote the book on it, coauthoring an insightful tome entitled "Inside Congress: A Guide for Navigating the Politics of the House and Senate Floors," published in 2017 by the Brookings Institution. It came this close to being a New York Times bestseller. But maybe still, with this speech today, it will reinvigorate sales.

As floor director for the Senate Democrats, Reema has worked closely with staff and Members on both sides of the aisle to whip bills and overcome hurdles. No matter how long or pitched the debate, she has always remained friendly, decent, optimistic, and dedicated. It was not unusual to find her still at her desk at midnight or 2 in the morning, sending her final whip alert or email of the day to Senate staffers summarizing the day's activities and the next day's Senate agenda.

Reema acquired her political and diplomatic acumen through hard work